Alberta

News release

Budget 2008
THE RIGHT PLAN FOR
TODAY & TOMORROW

April 22, 2008

Budget 2008 supports strong social programs for Alberta's growing population

Further investments made in programs for families, seniors, people with disabilities, children, and new Albertans

Budget highlights:

- *$76 million more for quality, affordable child care*
- *$46 million more for affordable supportive living for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities*
- *$58.5 million more for housing targeting lower-income Albertans and homeless people*
- *$41 million more for increased support to contracted social agencies*
- *$15.3 million more in supports to help immigrants, including $1.8 million more in settlement services*
- *$12.5 million more in resources to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*
- *$3.5 million more in support for community-based social programs*

Edmonton ... New investments in Budget 2008 will improve care services for Alberta families, provide more seniors and families with affordable and safe places to live, and help improve Albertans' quality of life.

Improving care for Alberta families:

$76 million in additional funding will support the first year of an initiative to support the creation of 14,000 new child care spaces by 2011 and provide low and middle-income Albertans with a subsidy for out-of-school care programs. The funding boost brings the total allotted to supporting quality, affordable child care to almost $197 million in 2008-09.

To help them remain competitive in a tight labour market, $41 million more is being provided to support contracted agencies ($11 million for agencies serving children and families, and $30 million for persons with developmental disabilities) so they can recruit and retain staff and continue to care for people.

$1.7 million in funding will be allotted for increasing the number of beds available in women's emergency shelters across the province to help ensure Albertans affected by family violence get the critical support they need.

"Solutions are in communities. We work with community partners to build strong children, youth and families," said Janis Tarchuk, Minister of Children and Youth Services. "Budget 2008 reflects our commitment to support our partners in the important work they do."

Providing more low-income families and seniors with affordable and safe places to live:

For seniors and persons with disabilities who are no longer able to live in their own homes, supportive living facilities provide a home-like setting with a range of housekeeping, meal, and personal services. Funding for affordable supportive living will be $80 million in 2008-09, which will enable the construction of 800 affordable supportive living units. An additional $16 million will support seniors lodge modernization and improvements. The Seniors Lodge Assistance program will total $32 million in 2008-09 to help lodge operators support lower-income seniors.

$309 million will support construction and maintenance of affordable housing units towards the province's goal of more than 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012. This includes $45 million for new units in Fort McMurray to ease housing pressures in one of Canada's fastest-growing communities.

$105 million for rent supplement programs and subsidized social housing will help keep rents affordable for lower-income Albertans.

A $93-million commitment in *Budget 2008* to prevent and address homelessness includes $49 million to operate shelters and provide services that help homeless people make the transition to permanent housing. It also includes $44 million for the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund. This year, the new Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness will develop a 10-year plan to address this urgent issue.

"This budget will help provide affordable and sustainable housing, so every Albertan will have access to a safe and appropriate place to live," said Yvonne Fritz, Minster of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Helping improve Albertans' quality of life:

$15.3 million in new funding will support language and skills training and settlement services to help newcomers adjust more smoothly to working and living in Alberta. New initiatives will market the province as a destination of choice for workers and help increase the number of workers under the Provincial Nominee Program to 3,000 by 2009. "Attracting people from beyond our borders is an important part of our plan to deal with labour force pressures," said Employment and Immigration Minister Hector Goudreau. "We want the right services to be in

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place to help people adapt to life in a new community."

An additional $13 million investment will support a 10-year plan to reduce the number of babies born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and help those affected to enjoy productive lives. Continuing to implement the plan will reduce the incidence of FASD, a lifelong disability about 23,000 Albertans face, and improve access to services for those already affected.

Funding will increase by $3.5 million to a total of $75 million for the Family and Community Support Services program, a cost-sharing partnership with municipalities and Métis settlements to support preventive social programs that meet local needs, such as keeping seniors active and healthy, helping families deal with conflict, and keeping people connected to their communities.

Albertans will continue to be helped through the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program totaling $98 million in 2008-09.

Social programs will keep pace with Alberta's growing population:

Funding for Alberta's seniors assistance programs will total more than $406 million in 2008-09, an increase of 12.3 per cent including Alberta Seniors Benefits monthly supplements, and assistance with dental and optical care and home repairs for more lower-income seniors.

Benefits under the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program increased January 1, 2008 to $1,088 per month. This fiscal year, $666 million is budgeted for the program, an increase of $64 million or 10.7 per cent over last year, which will also help accommodate additional client caseloads.

"Our government is committed to protecting Albertans who are most in need. My ministry continues to offer some of the best seniors and persons with disabilities programs in Canada," said Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Budget 2008 meets commitments to Albertans today while prudently planning for tomorrow.

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